



Georgia Department of Human Resources

CHILDREN 1ST

Children 1st works to ensure a healthy start for Georgia's most vulnerable children from birth until the age of five. During these early years, at-risk children can benefit greatly and develop to their fullest potential by receiving comprehensive preventive health care, specialized care when necessary, and many other associated services.

The Children 1st system is designed to help families of at-risk children get needed assistance and extra support in meeting the challenges of parenthood. Parents whose infants and children are at risk for poor health and developmental outcomes are linked to prevention based programs and services, such as child care and parent education classes. Children 1st is a statewide collaboration coordinated by the Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Public Health, Family Health Branch. Participation is voluntary and at no cost to families.

Identifying children at risk

About 30 percent of Georgia's children each year are born with medical conditions or live in circumstances that can cause health or developmental difficulties. Children 1st seeks to reach all Georgia families with newborns to identify those children and families who might need assistance. The Children 1st screening, assessment and referral process gives all of Georgia's children an opportunity for healthy development.

During FY2005, Children 1st identified over 53,000 newborns and children needing medical or developmental services. Of those children identified, over 21,000 family assessments were completed to identify family strengths and needs. Referral sources include doctors, nurses, hospitals or various community providers and caretakers. Of those children assessed, over 20,000 children were linked to primary health care providers for continued assistance. Over 43,000 children were monitored last year for health and developmental status.

Connecting children and families to services

When Children 1st identifies an eligible child, a public health nurse or other qualified professional contacts the child's family. The family is offered a home visit to identify strengths and needs. Once needs are assessed, families are linked to programs and services including health coverage and a primary health care provider, as necessary. With parental consent, Children 1st stays in contact with the child's primary health care provider until the child's fifth birthday to confirm that the child is receiving regular check-ups and other necessary medical services.

Community partners

The Children 1st program is provided through Georgia's 18 public health district offices, assisted by state staff in the Division of Public Health. Children 1st works in partnership with hospitals, physicians, public and private clinics, social service agencies, other child service providers and parents. Children 1st also collaborates with the Georgia chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Healthy Families; and the Family Connection Partnership to ensure healthy development of newborns and young children.

fact sheet

Children 1st is making a difference

A DeKalb county mother says, “The DeKalb Children 1st program has really helped my son and me. Because of the program my son is doing better, he runs, plays, talks better and is growing up very well. The nurse came to see me and signed me up for Children 1st. She sent him to Babies Can’t Wait and they put him in therapy for speech. She has helped me also because she got me into the dental clinic for immediate treatment. The nurse is warm, friendly, and an overall great person. No matter what she’s doing when she sees me at the health department, she always asks about my son’s progress. She’s always going out of her way to help my family with our needs. I really can’t say enough about our nurse and Children 1st.”

Additional information

For more information, visit <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/childrenfirst/> or call the state office at (404) 657-4143.

Georgia Department of Human Resources
Office of Communications
www.dhr.georgia.gov
January 2006